



## Washington Telecommunication Relay Service (WATRS) State FCC Certification Renewal and Supporting Documents

### Overview

In 1987, the Washington State Department of Social Health Services (DSHS) was given authority for the operation of Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) and Telecommunications Equipment Distribution (TED) programs. In accordance with its ADA Title IV responsibilities to provide a TRS program, the Washington Legislature promulgated RCW 43.20A.720 and 43.20A.725 (Exhibit S) which regulates the provision of telecommunications relay services in Washington. In Washington, TRS is known as Washington Telecommunication Relay Service (WATRS). The enabling statute went through several successive legislation revisions, with the last revision being made during the 2004 Legislative Session.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), through the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), contracts with Sprint to provide WATRS services. ODHH first began operation of WATRS services in 1993 through a contract awarded to AT&T that was in effect until June 27, 1998. On April 30, 1998, Sprint and DSHS entered into a three-year contract, with two one-year renewal options, for a total of five years, to operate WATRS services for the State of Washington. On August 2005, after a procurement phase, Sprint was awarded a second three-year contract, with two one-year renewal options, for a total of five years, to continue to operate WATRS services for the State of Washington. The current five year contract with Sprint is due to expire on August 28, 2010. Since its inception with Sprint, WATRS experienced steady and constant growth, processing approximately 32,000 calls in June 1998 and 96,000 calls in July 2002. Since then, call volume has declined due to other functionally equivalent telecommunication services being available.

The ODHH remains committed to maintaining a TRS that provides telephone access for persons with hearing and speech disabilities that is functionally equivalent to the telephone access provided to those who do not have such disabilities. ODHH plans to continue providing quality telecommunications services to Washington State residents who have specialized needs and intends to keep abreast of expanding technology in order to better serve the users of WATRS. Furthermore, Washington has made strides to stay ahead of the game by implementing services, like speech-to-speech relay and video relay, before those services became part of the current telecommunications infrastructure. Washington takes to heart its mission to make telecommunications available to all its citizens.